



News from

# Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 19, 2004

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## **Rep. Kind: Congress Should Address Laos Human Rights Issues Before Trade Rights are Granted**

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) released the following statement on the conflict in the U.S. Senate over the inclusion of a normalized trade agreement with Laos in an otherwise non-controversial trade bill (HR 1047- H Rept 108-771). The Senate is expected to vote on the bill today.

“I commend Senators Kohl and Feingold for standing firm to block legislation that would extend normalized trade relations to the Lao government when so many outstanding questions of human rights abuses against the Lao people remain,” stated Kind. “In October, I voiced my opposition against the measure when it came to the House because I strongly believe Congress needs to demonstrate that the United States seeks Democratic reforms in Laos.”

The trade bill under consideration is a non-controversial measure that would excuse scores of companies from paying duties on imports of goods for which there is no U.S. source. The Laos trade status element was included at the last minute, and Kind, along with Senators Kohl and Feingold, has insisted that it be pulled.

“Today, approximately 170,000 Hmong currently reside in this country, including 35,000 in the state of Wisconsin, and the nearly 8,000 in the Third District” said Kind. “Many of these Hmong-Americans have family members still in Laos. Constant allegations of harassment, imprisonment, and other human rights violations have been raised by numerous concerned groups. These reports of human rights abuses need to be addressed by Congress and the international community before we extend trade rights to the Lao government.”

In May, the House passed, by a near-unanimous vote, a resolution (H. Res. 402) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the urgent need for democratic reform and human rights in Laos.